

**CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF
2009 -- (House of Representatives - February 04, 2009)**

Mr. WAXMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 1 1/2 minutes.

I rise in strong support of H.R. 2, as amended by the Senate. This is the same bill, by and large, that we passed in the House by an overwhelming bipartisan majority a few weeks ago.

The opportunity before us today is to make basic health insurance available to 11 million low-income children who would otherwise have no insurance.

We know that without health insurance many children go without the health care they need to grow, to learn, to compete, and to contribute.

The bill before us will extend the current program for 4 1/2 years, ensuring that States will be able to maintain coverage for the 7 million kids now enrolled and to extend coverage to an additional 4.1 million uninsured low-income children.

The bill is fully paid for. It will cost \$33 billion over the next 5 years, fully offset by a 62-cent per pack increase in the cigarette tax.

The Senate made a few minor changes, adding a new option for CHIP to provide dental care for privately insured children and creating a new commission to evaluate provider payments and access in CHIP and Medicaid.

The Senate did not retain the House provision closing a loophole in Medicare that allows physicians to refer patients to hospitals where they have ownership interest. We will continue to work on that matter.

While this bill is short of our ultimate goal of health reform, it is a down payment, and it is an essential start. We need to pass this bill. We need to do so now.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill and send it to the President for his signature.

I reserve the balance of my time.